

WO-263

## Oscar M. Purnell House (Snow Hill Senior Center)

### **Architectural Survey File**

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site ([mht.maryland.gov](http://mht.maryland.gov)) for details about how to make an appointment.

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***Last Updated: 09-16-2019***

WO-263  
Oscar M. Purnell House  
Snow Hill  
private

c. 1900

Known for much of this century by the older residents of Snow Hill as the prominent dwelling of Oscar M. Purnell, this large Colonial Revival style brick house boasts a colossal Ionic columned front portico and a Tuscan columned wraparound porch. Other noteworthy features including Palladian-style colored glass windows and rusticated stone dressings around the various openings add to the impressive nature of this center hall, stretcher bond brick dwelling.

Interesting as well is the early history of this triangular property, designated as "Lot 22" on the 1793 Snow Hill plat. On June 11, 1796 part of the lot was transferred through a twenty-year lease from George Spence to James Givans at an annual rental of twenty-five shillings. Later, James Givans surfaces in the history of Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal church as a trustee of the early congregation, and it is recorded that the incorporation of the church and the election of the trustees was accomplished at the Givans house on January 25, 1808.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## State Historic Sites Inventory Form

### 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic OSCAR M. PURNELL HOUSE

and/or common SNOW HILL SENIOR CENTER

### 2. Location

street & number 107 East Market Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Snow Hill \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Worcester

### 3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
___ district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture ___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial ___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational ___ private residence
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment ___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government ___ scientific
	___ being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	___ industrial ___ transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	___ no	___ military ___ other:

### 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Worcester County Commission on Aging, Jean Monroe, Director

street & number 107 East Market Street telephone no.: 632-1277

city, town Snow Hill state and zip code MD 21863

### 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Worcester County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Worcester County Courthouse folio

city, town Snow Hill state MD 21863

### 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. WO-263

### Condition

\_\_\_ excellent  
-x good  
\_\_\_ fair

\_\_\_ deteriorated  
\_\_\_ ruins  
\_\_\_ unexposed

### Check one

\_\_\_ unaltered  
-x altered

### Check one

x original site  
\_\_\_ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Oscar M. Purnell house, now used by the Worcester County Commission on Aging, stands at 107 East Market Street in the center of Snow Hill, Worcester County, Maryland. Facing southeast, the two-and-a-half story brick house stands on a triangular lot of ground bordered by the eastern section of Green Street, formerly known as Spence's Alley, and East Market Street. Facing southeast, the roof ridge is oriented on a southeast/northwest axis.

Built during the first few years of the twentieth century, the two-and-a-half story, three-bay, stretcher bond brick dwelling is supported by a rusticated masonry foundation, and it is covered by a steeply pitched hip roof that has a slight kick to the eaves. Encircling three sides of the house is a Tuscan columned porch supported by rusticated masonry piers. The front center bay is dominated by a colossal Ionic columned porch that rises two full stories and is covered by a flat roof. The eave is trimmed with large console brackets, and square baluster railings stretch between the porch columns.

The southeast (main) elevation is a roughly symmetrical facade with a center projecting pavilion that contains double-door entrances on both floors which open onto generous porches. The front door is flanked by single-pane sash sidelights that are fitted with rusticated stone sills. East of the entrance is a large Palladian-style window with a rusticated stone arch and colored glass sash to each side of the center window. West of the entrance are large single-pane sash windows that pierce a rounded corner of the house. The second floor is marked by a pair of three-sided bay windows to each side of the center portico. Centered on the hip roof is a large gabled dormer that is pierced by an arched window opening that is surrounded by a field of fishscale shingles. Flanking the large gabled dormers are smaller gabled dormers with single pane windows and a pedimented front. Squarish brick chimneys rise through the center of the house.

The east and west sides of the house follow along similar lines with three bays defining each floor. Single-pane sash windows fitted with rusticated stone lintels and sills as well as three-sided bay windows mark the various openings. Pairs of large gabled dormers with round arched windows mark each roof slope. The sides of the dormers are sheathed with fishscale shingles.

The northwest (rear) elevation is an asymmetrical three-bay facade with a projecting center pavilion pierced by a tripartite colored glass window and topped by a large gabled dormer sheathed with fishscale shingles as well. Flanking the center pavilion to the east is the continuation of the Tuscan columned front porch and to the west the corner is filled with a two-story square columned porch. The window and door openings are fitted with rusticated stone lintels and door sills. A handicapped entrance has been added to the east side next to the cellar entrance.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. WO-263

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

### Specific dates

### Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Oscar M. Purnell house stands out as the largest Colonial Revival dwelling erected in Snow Hill. Dating to the first decade of the twentieth century, the squarish stretcher bond brick structure is covered by an expansive hip roof which is marked by a variety of gabled dormers sheathed in fishscale shingles. Most dominant, however, is the colossal Ionic columned front portico and the wraparound Tuscan columned porch. Additional features including Palladian-style colored glass windows and rusticated stone dressings around window and door openings enhance the expansive center hall, double-pile house. Although the property has been turned over to county offices for the Commission on Aging, the house maintains a residential type setting with a generous yard dotted with shrubs and small trees.

### HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Known for much of this century as the prominent dwelling of Oscar M. Purnell, the land on which this house stands, designated "Lot 22" on the 1793 Snow Hill plat, was partially devised to James Givans on June 11, 1796. (R/338) James Givans surfaces in the history of Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal Church as a trustee of the early congregation, and it is recorded that the incorporation of the church and the election of the trustees was accomplished at the Givans house on January 25, 1808. (See Democratic Messenger article, "100 years of Methodism in Snow Hill," Saturday, February 1, 1908 by Eben Hearne)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. WO-26a

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian

organization Worcester County

date 7/13/88

street &amp; number Worcester County Courthouse

telephone 301-651-1194

city or town Snow Hill

state MD 21863

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: Oscar M. Puenow House

MHT Inventory Number: NO-263

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

- 1) Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture

- 2) Geographic Orientation:

EASTERN SHORE

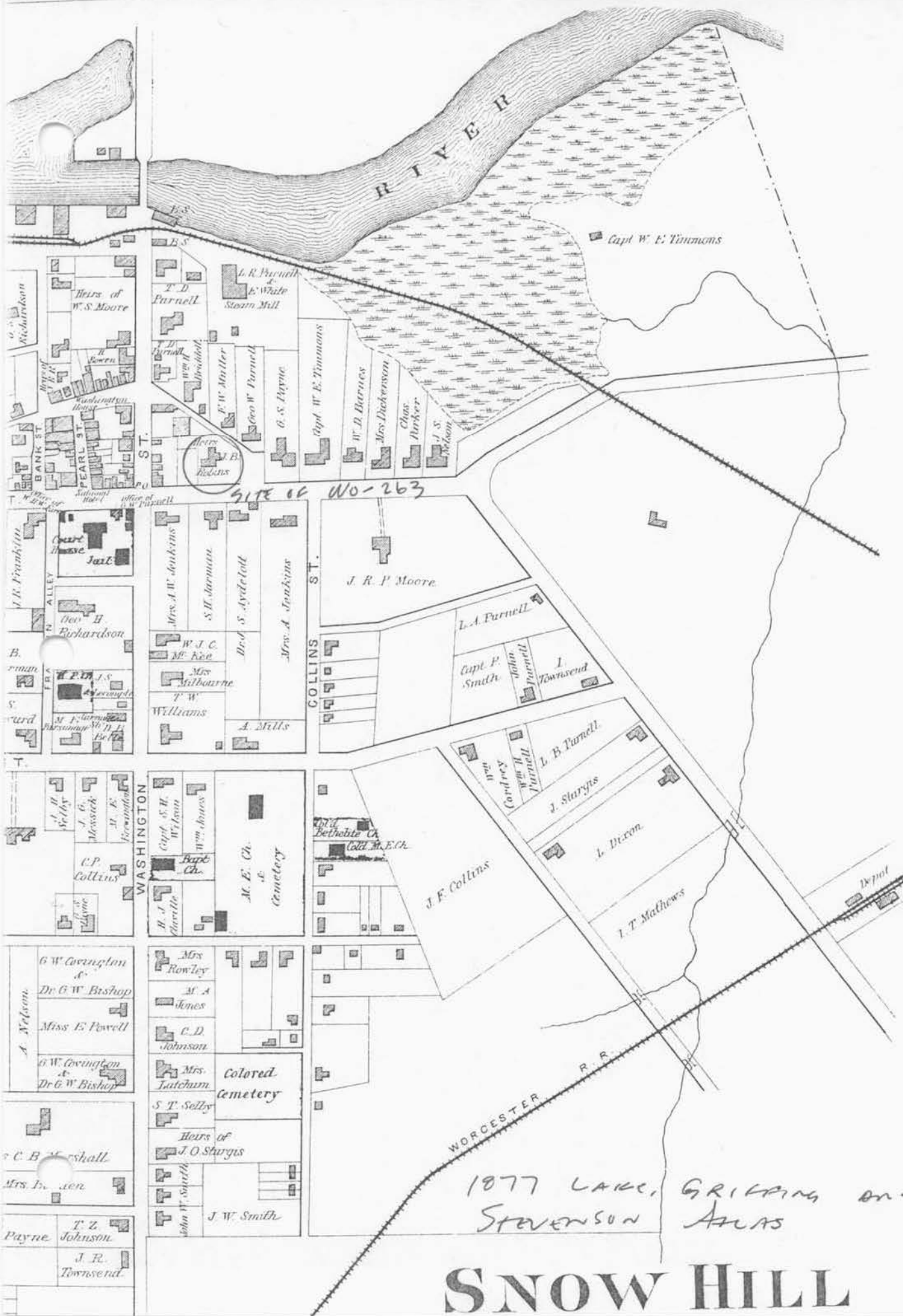
- 3) Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

1970-1990 INDUSTRIAL / URBAN DOMINANCE

- 4) Resource Type(s):

1. SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING (NOW SENIOR CENTER)

A



# SNOW HILL



WO-263  
OSCAR M. PURNELL HOUSE  
Snow Hill, MD Quadrangle, 1966

WO-263

